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ABSTRACT

The language development of one child was examined from birth to three years of age in order to map the similarities and differences in the acquisition of oral language, reading, and writing skills. The study also sought to provide insight into why learning to read and write are not as naturally easy as learning to talk. Data were collected by tape recording daily the child's oral language, making transcripts of interactions between the child and the researcher, and keeping a log of time spent by the child in interaction, which was complemented by monthly half-hour videotapes and one-hour cassettes of oral language and reading. Books, reading interests, writing and drawing samples, play equipment, and activities were catalogued chronologically. The following observations were made after analyzing the data: (1) early reading and writing demonstrate communicative intent, (2) language learning is easier with a responsive model who gives immediate feedback in a predictable environment, (3) the language arts are interdependent support systems, (4) the language learner directs his or her own learning, (5) both reading and writing require developmental definitions, and (6) "readiness" is an inappropriate term in developmental literacy. The study concluded that, given an encouraging environment with proficient language models, even the very youngest member of a literate society uses semantic intent to intuitively separate storytelling, story reading, writing, and drawing as interdependent support systems bound by their respective discourse contexts. (RL)

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Language Development and Early Encounters with Written Language

Paper presented at the

National Council of Teachers of English Convention
Boston, November 20-25, 1981

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Introduction

The study which I am about to summarize for you today suits the theme of the 1981 NCTE Convention. In order to sustain the essentials in the integration of the language arts, we need to re-examine the characteristics basic to an integrated learning context. Deciding that an infant encountering print was about as basic as one could go, and having an infant at hand, I decided to observe the actions, audio and videotape the reading and writing interactions, and collect the writing and drawing samples of my daughter from birth to three years of age.

Our daughter Giti was born on August 5, 1976. At the time, we lived in a one bedroom apartment in married student housing on the campus of Indiana University, where her father was Visiting Assistant Professor of Folklore and I was a graduate student in reading education. I was primarily responsible for care during the first three years of her life, with the exception of Summer 1979 when her father assumed most of this responsibility. During Giti's second year her maternal grandparents made three one-month visits and assumed total responsibility for her care from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily. Giti's friends were youngsters in University housing ranging in age from three months to five years. She played with these children as often as possible.

Reading Development

We all read to her whenever she wanted, took her to the library, restaurants, and stores, talked to her, asked her questions, answered her questions, pointed out and named objects and praised her. A conscious decision was made to introduce Giti to reading by reading to her, but no direct teaching of a particular method of reading instruction or of the alphabet as the alphabet was conducted. No handmade books, with the exception of the logos that she recognized at 25 months,

were used in order to assure ease in replication and generalization of this project.

When reading to Giti I usually held her on my lap. If I was sitting alone and Giti wanted me to read, she would select a book, stand in front of me and back up to me with book in hand. Giti did this with her father and with visitors after she got to know them. As she grew into reading in the morning, she would climb into bed, share the pillow, and hand over a book to be read. Her grandparents usually sat next to her when reading and as Giti became bigger, she occasionally wanted to sit next to me or her father, but close enough for her to lean on us and for us to put an arm around her. I consciously would direct Giti into sitting on my lap even as she grew older because we both enjoyed the physical contact and it seemed to enhance the person-to-person communication inherent in early reading.

Giti received Pat the Bunny as her first book at nine months. Pat the Bunny is predictable and appeals to the child's orientation to action and participation. After the text was read and demonstrated to her just one time, she was able to assume the role of "you" whenever it might be read. Cloth books and a Mother Goose with cardboard pages were then added to her library. These books allowed questions on details in the pictures ("Do you see the _____?"), commands ("Look at the_____."), and comments ("Isn't the cat funny!"). Any response which Giti made in action or speech was met with, "Yes," "That's right," or "Good". By 12 months, her book handling behavior was clearly established. She could flip books rightside up, turn pages from left to right, and favor particular pictures by banging on them with her hand, keeping the book open to certain pages, or locating favorite pages. In addition to traditional rhymes such as "Peek-a-Boo" and "This Little Piggy", the introduction of Mother Goose permitted participation in "Pat-a-Cake" and song equivalents in

"Ring Around the Rosie", "Mary Had a Little Lamb", "London Bridge", and "Yankee Doodle". These rhymes could be sung while riding in a car or taking a walk, and Giti frequently instigated the chorus by babbling in song herself. Each time she encountered the text, she demonstrated that she knew which pages could be sung. When these rhymes came, she sang, clapped, and usually refused to turn the page until she tired of the more familiar rhyme. Later, the introduction of the texts to Old MacDonald Had a Farm and The Mulberry Bush provided the same interaction between song as part of oral language and song as part of written language. We supplemented these activities by telling stories from the plots of her books and from familiar life events such as "When Your Birthday Comes".

By nine months, Giti sounded like an English-speaking child. She had determined HOW PEOPLE SOUND WHEN THEY TALK. At 14 months she began to pick up her books, family magazines, or fourth-class mail and practice babbling with her books. Third person observers who saw her commented, "She sounds as if she is reading." She apparently had separated a broad framework for HOW PEOPLE SOUND WHEN THEY READ as opposed to HOW PEOPLE SOUND WHEN THEY TALK.

Giti clearly distinguished print by 20 months. She continued to maintain her book babbling whenever she was not interested in labeling an item in a book or magazine. She applied this activity to her books, our books, fourth class mail, credit cards, billboards, license plates, etc., but never with a non-print item. She consistently identified the broad yellow M as /onaw/ (for MacDonald's) whether it stood alone or appeared on a billboard or cup. She would also respond /onaw/ (for McDonald's) to the same style of M written on paper. In the context of appropriate locations, from 22 months, she would say, "Sears" when entering Sears and "ayr*way" when entering or passing ayr*way. Her sense of direction in finding the public swimming pool, the bank, a particular restaurant,

and friends' houses was flawless. At 24 months, when we stopped for a red light in an unfamiliar town, she shouted, "K-mart!" The stores were so numerous that the marquee was not immediately obvious to us. Farther along the road, she noted "ayr*way" and was also correct. At the next rest stop, when presented with K-mart printed as the logo by her father, she read "K-mart." Until ayr*way was written exactly as the logo she could not read it. Once the "a" was printed typographically and the tail of the "Y" swung to the left, she immediately read it and pointed to the space between the ayr and way and said, "Flower," directing us to put a flower rather than a hyphen between the words. Met with enthusiasm, she began to question, "That?" (rising intonation) and point from her car seat as she passed familiar places. Once the labels were provided, she recognized them again. By 26 months she could read 22 signs whether they were large, small, or even partially missing. She would also run to get the newspaper to be able to read or clap and shout the name when a familiar store or item was advertised on television. When grocery shopping, she could accurately handle such assignments as, "Go and get a Bounty papertowel," or "Find a big box of Cheerios." She could also read her own name printed upper and lower case inside her books or on cards sent to her, and printed all upper case on name tags given at the public library storyhours.

By 24 months, she demonstrated labeling and associating within print. Pointing at the K in Special K, she would say, "K-mart," and pointing at the m in K-mart, she would say, "McDonald's." At 25 months, when encountering print, if she failed to read the logo correctly, usually because she was tired or disinterested, she supplied the name of its category. For instance, Kroger became "grocery" and Rice Krispies became "cereal." By 30 months, she demonstrated the z on her wooden block and said, "Look. Like in zoo." At this time she started to recognize large print whole words in her books. She learned to read

"YOU" through the predictable ending of Sesame Street's Big Bird and Little Bird's Big and Little Book. Not only could she supply "you" at the appropriate moment in the oral reading, but she could read YOU printed on paper. Dr. Seuss' more predictable Marvin K. Mooney, Will You Please Go Now provided practice with YOU and she learned to read GO and NOW in a variety of print contexts. In addition she began to gain understandings from her books which she could even apply in the future. 500 Words to Grow On showed different kinds of boats. We had no occasion to differentiate within the category "boat" in conversation, but when Giti was confronted with real boats on a lake, she correctly classified them, "That sailboat. That motor boat."

Reading continued to grow as her favorite activity. Her day centered on three major reading sessions: after waking; before an afternoon nap; before going to sleep at night. At one sitting, which lasted usually an hour, she requested the reading of five to ten books, which she selected. In her 28th month, there was not enough time available to satisfy her ever-increasing demands. We read three books at one sitting and then urged her to read herself. Now before the reading periods began, she confidently separated the books into those that she wanted others to read, and those familiar enough to her that she would read them herself. Rather than employing her previously useful book babbling, she labelled comprehensible people, objects, and actions in the sequence of the story. Only when she attempted totally unfamiliar print, such as the fourth class mail or our books, did she resort to book babbling. While story-telling, singing, and questioning were maintained primarily by the adults around her, she began to handle more of the reading activities herself. She would sit by her bookshelf and read by herself between the major interactions with adults. We frequently had to urge her into other activities to create a better-rounded day.

Giti's 28th month involved the entire family in what at the time appeared to be a crisis in communication. At the beginning of the month her sentences were seven to ten words long and usually comprehensible. However, during this month two changes in her conversation appeared. Gradually very little of what she said was intelligible but yet she seemed to be saying more and more. She was understood only if limited to two or three words at one time. By the beginning of her 30th month occasional words were distinguishable in her long tirades, and slowly by the end of the same month, she could once again be understood. She now told stories (See Table 1).

Table 1

Chronological Comparison of Oral Language and Reading Development

Approximate Age in Months	Oral Language	Approximate Age in Months	Reading
9	babbling	9	first encounter with a book
12	labeling in environment		
		14	book babbling
		14	labeling in books
15	associations in environment		
20	categorizations in environment	20	associations across books
24	assumption of equal role in conversation		
		25	categorizations of print items
		28	assumption of responsibility in reading
30	story telling schema	30	story reading schema

Writing Development

We frequently wrote in front of her, but made no conscious decision to engage her in writing. Messages were taken down while talking on the telephone. Grocery lists were written on small pieces of paper. Thank you notes were composed after receiving gifts, and cards were mailed when gifts were sent or holidays occurred. Checks were signed and forms completed. She began to approach whenever I might be writing and stand at my elbow to watch. If her father was sitting on the couch writing, she would crawl up and sit next to him, peeping over his shoulder and leaning hard on his arm. By 17 months, she attempted to grab pens and paper when we tried to write and she would shout, "Me," or /papa/ for either or both the paper and pen. With only a few demonstrations of how to hold the pen and fit her fingers around it, she began to scribble on sheets of scrap paper which she could remove as she wanted from a drawer kept especially for her. Pens were located in a holder at the telephone or in a desk drawer, both places she could reach when she wanted to initiate writing. She would also remove pens from pockets and pocketbooks and compete with us for the use of pens when we started to write. Putting a sheet of paper on a magazine and then on her lap, she would practice writing while sitting next to us. She would also lie on her stomach on the floor and practice on her own or command one of us to join her. Her attempts at written language were met with, "That's good," "How nice," or "Just fine." A small notebook was carried outside the house to occupy her in restaurants or while waiting for appointments. When questioned, "What did you write?" or "What did you draw?" she pointed to what she had done or banged on it with her whole hand. When asked, "Please write something for me," or "Please draw something for me," she would use the implements that were most handy and do the same kind of scribbling. By 19 months, her scribbling

did not sprawl over the page to such an extent, and she appeared to have noticed dots in others' writings which she reproduced.

One of her favorite play activities at 21 months was writing on written language. She would attack the fourth class mail, newspaper, and flyers just to scribble on the writing. By 24 months she began to practice book babbling on her own writing. The same day she looked at the K-mart logo and pointed to the m and said, "onald," she attempted a row of peaks on paper. She began another row of peaks and said, "Mom." At 25 months she started to write G from the bottom to the top, point to what she had done, and say /diydiy/ for her own name. By 26 months she practiced G with linear expansions and distinguished appropriate lengths for Giti, Grandma, and Grandpa.

Her grandparents drew for her entertainment more than they wrote. While Giti could not clearly distinguish drawing from writing among her own productions, she would always ask her grandparents to draw and us to write for her. After their visit, she would ask me, "Write Grandma." If I wrote Grandma, she would become upset and say, "No, no. Draw Grandma." These sessions became frustrating for both of us as she attempted to sort out how to communicate what she wanted to appear on paper. At 27 months she organized her writing demands into dictations of lists of words she wanted to see. By the end of the month she began to compose letters which she would fold over. She also filled out forms and blanks everywhere we went. In her 28th month after eating out, we returned home. Giti found a small pad, stood in front of us and said, "You want?" For each item we mentioned she wrote one linear expansion to make a list on the pad, beginning what became a waitress game. By 29 months her general

dictations were frequently 25 words long and could last as much as a half hour. An adult observer could note differences in her products. Her oral language indicated when she was drawing, "Here's a wall, a pond, flowers." But at 30 months when asked to draw, she would tell the questioner to draw. At 31 months, she finally declared, "I drawing." Letter writing continued to dominate her writing activities. She insisted on mailing her letters by taping them to doors or putting strings in and around them so she could drag them in mail sack fashion. By 34 months she was confident enough in her understandings to draw a picture of grandma and write the word "Grandma" on the same page (See Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2

Development of Written Language

Approximate Age in Months	Written Language
17	paper and pen handling; unorganized scribbling
20	vertical and horizontal scribbling
21	labels "Snoopy", "cat", and "writing" indiscriminately
24	consistent linearity; sound-letter associations
26	categorization of writing and drawing with people
27	writing schema; Giti perceives and labels her writing as writing
29	adults distinguish her products as writing or drawing
31	Giti perceives and labels her products as writing or drawing

Table 3

Chronological Comparison of Oral Language, Reading, and Written Language Development

Approximate Age in Months	Oral Language
9	babbling
12	labeling in environment
15	associations in environment
20	categorizations in environment
30	story telling schema

Approximate Age in Months	Reading
14	book babbling
14	labeling in books
20	associations across books
25	categorizations of print items
30	story reading schema

Approximate Age in Months	Written Language
17	scribbling
21	labeling products
24	associations of sounds and letters
26	categorization of writing and drawing
27	writing schema
31	drawing schema

OBSERVATIONS

(1) Early reading and writing demonstrate communicative intent.

Giti's early social understandings gave her the raw material to use in her discovery of the world. From context-bound messages in which setting, body language, and verbal message all contributed to meaning, she used semantic intent to build vocabulary within developing syntactic rules. We emphasized meaning in our communications to her and in our expectations from her utterances. Through her interactions with us, Giti learned that her oral language had to have a semantic core to be of communicative value. She learned to understand as well as to expect understanding from other people, and communicative intent became her first and strongest learning strategy.

Physical proximity during interactions supported Giti's early speaking-reading contexts. Perhaps the success of our reading to her derives from the extra opportunity it provided for body contact along with social interaction. Parents can enjoy reading as an intensely private act, but a child cannot tolerate such withdrawal and will often slap down newspapers or magazines when parents read silently to themselves. Giti kept her early reading as social and functional as speaking.

Giti's writing of a single letter or word was followed by "See" or "look". Someone had to be present to view the output and respond to it. With time the interaction obvious in the writing context expanded to her waitress game and the more distant in time letter writing. As with her reading, Giti kept her writing as social and functional as speaking.

(2) Language learning is easier with a responsive model who gives immediate feedback in a predictable environment.

Giti spent most of her first three years in the company of adults who supported her language attempts by listening to her, answering her questions,

reading to her, writing notes to her, providing books and materials for writing and locating opportunities such as participation in library storyhours and membership in a book club, which would also maintain her enthusiasm for the language arts. Her environment was exciting and she had a 1:1 relationship with proficient language users.

It is a truism that anyone learns anything, whether reading or tennis, easier in frequent interaction with a model who is more proficient than the learner. If Giti had been one of many children at home or in a preschool, opportunities for the sustained dialogue which was her principal vehicle of learning would have certainly been reduced. Because the participant-observer in the study was her mother, who had virtually unlimited contact with her, Giti's patterns of development in the language arts and their interrelations could be clearly observed. Given a situation where a researcher visits a child being studied once or twice a week, such patterns would be more difficult to discern.

Giti's home environment followed a fixed weekday routine. She knew the overall pattern of her days, could predict what was going to happen, and would question, "Where we going?" or "Why?" for any deviations. There is some evidence that such stability encourages exploratory behavior, a good self-image, a perception of effective adults, and a grasp of logic and order in the world (Gibson and Levin, 1975, pp. 268-269). Thus, successful guesses are intrinsic rewards which reinforce both the act and the continuation of learning itself.

(3) <u>The language arts are interdependent support systems</u>.

Giti was simultaneously involved in oral language, reading, and writing. At first oral language satisfied her immediate needs, but when she recognized the value of reading and writing for communication, the processes became inter-supportive. Giti used their relationships to define and categorize contexts

for speaking, reading, writing, and drawing acts. Once she localized the contexts, she could separate a schema for each process and then using the schema, she could keep defining each system. Apparently in order to get it all together, she had to first figure out each category. Therefore, reading and writing were independent schemata triggered directly by thought and bound by their respective discourse contexts within her communicative model.

Giti used oral language, reading, writing, and drawing as partners within a larger system of mutually reinforcing processes. Her experience with rhymes and songs helped her locate them in her books. As her experiences broadened, she used the books to help her categorize and label items and events in her environment. Her application of "motor boats" and "sail boats" seen in books to real boats on a lake demonstrated that the limited experience of a very young child can be expanded through print. Similarly, oral language supported Giti's early writing. She said, "Me," or /papa/ to get paper and a pen to write, and then sang as she scribbled. Later she demanded dictations and initiated her waitress game as a situation in which talking and writing were complementary. By practicing book babbling on her own writing, Giti demonstrated her understanding that what she had written was meaningful and could be read, and she had to have been able to read M and G in order to practice writing them as her favorite letters. Writing and drawing were reproductions of letters, objects, and people she perceived, and she used oral language to label them. She used the same dictionary books with which she had built up her oral vocabulary to gain a sight vocabulary for reading. She chose words from these same books to copy on paper.

(4) The language learner directs her own learning.

Giti selected books to read, questioned plots in the books, demanded dictations, initiated the waitress game, set up school, and maintained letter-

writing. She determined the occasion for these activities and the amount of time spent on them. She questioned, she chose, and she persisted. Whenever she wanted, she could have given up reading and writing as uninteresting. Particularly at 27 months before her clarification of storytelling and reading, and at 30 months before her clarification of writing and drawing, her frustration was so intense that it might have been easier for her to give up. Yet her need to communicate through reading and writing demonstrated the value she placed on these processes, and her frustration instead stimulated cognitive clarification. We waited and she worked out her schemata.

(5) Reading Requires A Developmental Definition.

At eighteen months, Giti would pick up a book from the floor, put it right-side up, and turn pages from left to right. Such early book handling has been documented on videotape (Hill-Diehl, 1979). We can speculate that this kind of top-bottom, left-right orientation would not have occurred if Giti had been in a language group which did not represent its print with such directionality.

The lap method (Moffett and Wagner, 1976) in which a parent, grandparent, or sibling holds a small child and reads aloud takes place in many families. Giti, accustomed to this practice as a toddler, chose a book, stood in front of someone she decided could read, and backed up to the reader. Parents met casually since this case study have frequently commented that their toddlers did the same to initiate reading.

When did Giti begin to read? Smith (1971) declares that reading begins with the first word the child can recognize. According to Ryan (1977, p. 159), "When a child responds to a common symbol around the house, beginning reading should be considered to be occurring." We need only to recall Helen Keller's

connecting the water pumped on her hand to the word "water" to agree with Emery (1975, p. 113) that the step from understanding no language symbol to knowing just one is monumental. The matching of a word heard in the passage of time to a word seen localized in space is a tremendous task. And yet until that child conforms to an adult definition of reading, most people will not call that child a reader. Interestingly, a child will utter a single word, and proud relatives declare her "talking". If many two-year-olds (Gibson and Levin, 1975; Ryan, 1977; Baghban, 1979; Divita, 1980) recognize the signs for fast food restaurants, cereals, stores, etc., then this is reading for two-year-olds exposed to a rich print environment. "Zoo", "Stop", Kroger, Sears, milk, thank you, in, out, Boys, Girls, Ladies, Men, Enter, Exit appear to be common sight words for preschoolers (Divita, 1980; Cooper, 1981).

By three years of age, Giti could look at the pictures of a favorite book and produce the story, retaining the original meaning of the text and including dialogue. She read to us and to dolls in story hour fashion, careful to begin with "Once upon a time" or "One day" and add "The End" at the end. Parent-researchers have documented such story schema demonstrations with other three-year-olds (Cohn, 1981; Divita, 1980; Cooper, 1981).

This case study ended at 34 months. However, during Giti's fourth year, she seemed compelled to say something as she turned each page of a book. At that time she had favorite books that she wanted to listen to over and over, even at the same sitting. She also would supply the words in the stories if overlooked. She could recognize familiar sight words in various print and sizes. Parents and parent-researchers of other four-year-olds have often observed such behaviors (Cooper, 1981; Divita, 1980). By 4.9 years, Giti "took off" reading Bright and Early Books with smooth intonation and speed. Now at 5 years she can handle Amelia Bedelia, Little Monster, folk tales and some of Newsweek. She questions vocabulary such as "looked puzzled", "cackled", or

"It's none of your business", but gives the impression of being able to tackle just about any kind of print.

Giti's reading began with localizing the appropriate contexts for print, and with gross approximations to print. Her reading became successively refined until she more closely matched adult definitions of reading through her ease in handling written materials. But at each stage, Giti intended to read when she engaged in reading activities and she always thought of herself as reading. Other children documented at 18 months, 2, 3, and 4 years also considered themselves to be reading. Because researchers agree that reading follows stages and children at approximately the same age behave with print in a similar fashion across their age group (Clay, 1975; Holdaway, 1979), adults should also call them readers. Terms such as "pre-reading", "reading-like", "learning to read", and "reading" in quotation marks should be dismissed from the literature on natural readers. They <u>are</u> reading.

(6) <u>Writing Requires a Developmental Definition</u>

Giti began to scribble at 17 months. According to Catell's (1960) scale of infant intelligence, the average child will scribble spontaneously at 18 months when given paper and pencil or earlier if given a demonstration of how to write. Because Giti had adult models and writing demonstrations, the physical ability to hold a writing instrument, and the materials available, she could support this observation. She began with unorganized scribbles and moved to scribbles with vertical and horizontal tendencies. Such a transition has been documented for early writers (Hildreth, 1936; Legrun, 1932; Clay, 1975), and many parents note a love of playing with circles at this time (Goffin, 1981). By the end of her second year, Giti demonstrated consistent linearity in her writing. She asked for the names of letters she saw. This activity proceeded toward a variety of unbroken structures to units with real or approximations of real letters during her third year (Hildreth, 1936; Legrun, 1932; Clay, 1975; Divita,

1980; Cooper, 1981).

Parent-researchers have documented support activities such as playing teacher or waitress, writing letters and typing strings of letters (Cooper, 1981; Divita, 1980; Hutchinson, 1981; Goffin, 1981). Typical of early writers, Giti wrote her own name first. By four years of age, her favorite vocabulary for notes was "Hi", "me", "Baba", "Mommy", "I love you". At the same time, she filled piles of paper practicing with letters of the alphabet with various orientations, in lists and from left to right or right to left. She could write anything if spelled for her. By five years she began to guess at the spellings of words using consonants. Interestingly, when her activity in writing peaked, her activity in reading temporarily lessened and vice versa. Other parent-researchers have also noted that their children seem able to maintain heightened activity in only one process at a time and take turns engaging in reading or writing (Divita, 1980; Cooper, 1981).

When did Giti begin to write? Once she could hold a writing instrument, with each activity she intended to write and considered herself to be writing. The other children documented at 18 months, 2, 3, and 4 years also considered themselves to be writing. Because researchers agree that writing follows stages and children at approximately the same age behave with print in a similar fashion across their age group (Gentry, 1981; Clay, 1975), adults should also call them writers. Terms such as "pre-writing", "mock writing", "Writing like", "learning to write", and "writing" in quotation marks should be dismissed from the literature on natural writers. They <u>are</u> writing.

(7) <u>"Readiness" is an inappropriate term in developmental literacy</u>.

Giti read because print existed in her environment and she was introduced to pleasurable reading activities. Given her natural curiosity, exposure to people who wrote in front of her, and the physical capacity to hold a writing implement,

she began to write. While the definitions of reading literally run the gamut, the intent to read and the intent to write are common starting points. Durkin (1963) recommends that the best way to assess a child's readiness for learning to read is to give the child the opportunity to do so. Gibson and Levin (1975) concur that given a child's natural curiosity, she should be considered ready to extract information from the printed page as soon as she has the opportunity to look at any book and hear someone read. It follows then that seeing someone write, and having materials available with the physical ability to use them, determines readiness to write. In this sense, the only criteria which might then be considered readiness-related are the child's interest and the availability of reading and writing models and materials. No other preparation is necessary for an encounter with print.

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This overview presents a summary of a three-year study. The wealth of specific data collected over the first 34 months of Giti's life suggests that continued research by trained parents using a case study approach offers as much to language arts education as it does to child language research while both fields struggle to construct accurate models of children's oral and written language development. In the search to describe the processes, we must constantly remind ourselves never to underestimate children as learners. If such a young learner can informally direct her own progress and use what she <u>has</u> learned to gain control of what she <u>is</u> learning, the least each of us can do is to keep the inherent meaning in oral and written language interaction alive in classrooms - - and the pleasure that comes from the understanding of such interaction.

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